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NEW REASONS

FOR ABOLISHING

THE SLAVE TRADE;

BRING THE LAST SECTION

OF A LARGER WORK, NOW FIRST PUBLISHED,

ENTITLED

“THE DANGERS OF THE COUNTRY.”

THE AUTHOR OF “WAR IN DISGUISE.”

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR J. BUTTERWORTH, FLEET-STREET;
AND J. HATCHARD, PICCADILLY.

1807.

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THE following Sheets are the concluding section of a larger work, which issues at the same time with them from the press, entitled, "The Dangers of the Country."

In that work the Author has taken a distinct view of a possible calamity, hitherto regarded too much in the abstract, to be justly estimated, that of our falling under the yoke of France. He has afterwards attempted to demonstrate the impolicy and danger of making peace with that Power, in her present state of aggrandisement; and above all, has endeavoured to shew the inadequacy of our domestic defence, and the proper means of improving it; one of which, and in his opinion the most important, is the propitiation of Heaven, by an immediate Abolition of the Slave Trade.

A work so comprehensive in its plan, has unavoidably formed a pretty large pamphlet; and has cost much more time than the Author at first expected; so that he has found himself unable to offer it to the Public, till the great practical question considered in the following sheets has come again under deliberation in Parliament; and is likely very soon to be decided.

At the same time, he finds the public mind suddenly elevated by the report of an improved state of affairs on the Continent; and though we have seen enough of strange reverses, as well as of false intelligence, to teach us the rashness of trusting to these new born hopes, they will probably make the generality of readers less disposed to attend, at this moment, to plans of military defence, or to the dangers of invasion.

It has been thought right, therefore, to publish separately, a part of the work, which, though intimately connected with, has no necessary dependence on, the rest; and which, if at all worthy of public attention, now most pressingly demands it.

London, 26th January, 1807.

Sect. 4. Reformation, is an essential basis of our national safety.

It remains to say something of that other mean of averting our public dangers, which I proposed to consider, namely, reformation. As to *patience* and *unanimity*, their importance will be readily perceived; but the necessity of such *reformation*, as I mean to suggest, may perhaps not be equally obvious.

Were I to recommend the correction of abuses of a financial or constitutional kind, some readers would readily concur.—These, they would say, are indispensably necessary; and without these, patience and unanimity cannot be expected. But these are species of reformation, which it is not my design here to consider; both because there is no dearth of advocates to recommend them; and because a wish to reform such abuses, where they admit of safe correction, is not wanting in his Majesty's councils.

Frugality in the public expenditure, is beyond all doubt a duty of high moment; and the neglect of it under the present circumstances of the country, would be truly opprobrious. Whether any such constitutional reformations, as moderate and wise men have desired, ought now to be attempted, is a question which I will not discuss. It is of too extensive and delicate a-nature, to form an incidental topic in a work like this. I will only remark, that as there never was a period in which the popularity of our glorious constitution, and of our government, was more important; so never was it more dangerous to propose in Parliament, any measure greatly desired by a large portion of

the people, against the known sense of a majority of the legislature.

Leaving such questions to others, I would insist only on the immediate duty and necessity of one reformation, which we have too long owed, both to God and Man ; which a great part of the community most anxiously desires ; to which both Houses of Parliament are now solemnly pledged ; and which I firmly believe to be more essential to the salvation of the country, than her volunteers, her army, or her navy : I mean the abolition of the Slave trade.

Here, perhaps, some readers who have hitherto assented to most of my remarks, and have found little to censure in these pages, except the feeble and inadequate manner in which momentous truths have been treated, will be disposed to lay the pamphlet down with a smile ; and exclaim, what connection has this stale subject with the fate of England ?

I conjure them, however, if they have borne with me thus far, to listen a little longer. I implore them to recollect, that many of the most important relations between human events and human conduct, have been hidden from the wise and prudent, till subsequent to catastrophes which their timely discovery might have averted : “ If thou hadst known, even thou, at least “ in this thy day, the things that belong unto thy “ peace ! But now they are hid from thine eyes.”

That the Slave trade is in its consequences, politically injurious to the country, is a proposition which has been proved so often, and so clearly, in Parliamentary debates, and in arguments addressed to the

public, that I need scarcely regret the want of time to offer here new demonstrations of its truth. It can be doubted only by those who will not listen or read on the subject ; or whose prejudices are quite invincible.

The national mischiefs, however, produced by this commerce and the colonial system which it generates, are more and greater than even abolitionists have yet stated. They are evils sustained at the great expence of that commercial welfare which they are falsely alledged to promote ; and by a still more ruinous waste of our national wealth. They have cost us tenfold as many millions as they have truly returned.

The bankruptcies among our merchants, and the losses among our manufacturers, produced by the Slave trade, and by West India speculations in new lands, those kindred bubbles with which it is always associated, notoriously and greatly exceed, in number and extent, the gains and the fortunes produced by them.

I quarrel with no theorists here ; unless they would push their maxims to preposterous extremes. Be it admitted, that the wrecks of individual enterprize are often public emolument : still there must be limits to the practical application of such theories. A nation cannot profit by the adventures of its citizens, when private ruin is the ordinary event ; and success the rare exception.

Hazardous, and in a general view, unsuccessful, as these speculations have always been, they are now become infinitely more so. Before the markets of Europe were shut to our West India produce, the prices of Sugar were so far from yielding a profit on the

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Planter's capital, that they hardly paid his annual expences, and the charges of sending his commodity to Europe. War has I admit, contributed to these effects. But war, alas ! is now become a perennial evil. Nor could peace bring any mitigation that could possibly turn the balance in favour of the planters at large. In fact, sugar planting has long been, on an average, a losing business ; and is now become from the natural progress of causes inherent to the existing system, independently of the evils of war, but above all from the continuance of the slave trade, a speculation which, to the great majority of adventurers, is and must be ruinous.*

That men are found still to engage in it, is no argument whatever to the contrary ; any more than the great

* That the sugar planters, in the old islands, have, for many years, been progressively sinking deeper and deeper in ruin, is a fact quite undisputed among those who know any thing of the case. In a late publication, by a gentleman of high commercial character, and intimately connected with the sugar colonies, it is held that estates in St. Kitt's, an island famous for the quantity and quality of its produce, do not produce on an average, for a series of years, 4 per cent. on the capital invested. Yet the legal interest of that island is 8 per cent. ; and many planters are glad to obtain money at that rate. The incumbrances on estates in the West Indies, notoriously bear a large proportion to the whole value of the capital : it requires little calculation therefore to shew, that enormous losses must be incurred ; and on whom do they chiefly fall, but English creditors ?—See letter to William Manning, Esq. M. P. by C. Bosanquet, Esq. p. 17.

If further proof be wanted, that sugar planting is become a ruinous employment for our commercial capital, I refer to Sir William Young's late work ; and to the last manifesto of the Jamaica Assembly, printed by order of the House of Commons, February 25th, 1805. Bankruptcy is there described as the almost universal lot of the planters of that island.

sale of lottery tickets, is a proof that the chances are on the whole beneficial to the purchasers.

The West India lottery, from the unhappy and extreme inequalities of sugar crops, has still a few tempting prizes : and so it would, perhaps, if upon the general capital embarked, there were a loss of 90 per cent. The successful adventures, like the 20,000l. prizes at Guildhall, are blazoned in every walk of English commerce ; while the blanks are unnoticed and forgot. New dupes therefore are continually found ; and while millions are periodically sunk by our planters, and slave traders, by our merchants and monied men who trust them, and by our manufacturers who trust the merchants ; the nation, like a simple lottery club, is fatally persuaded, that it is beneficial to follow the game.

Mean time, the accursed system begotten and upheld in all its abuses by the Slave trade, produces a state of interior weakness and danger in these colonies, which has made them, both in peace and war, most expensive incumbrances on the revenues of the parent state ; and fatal drains on our regular army. The West Indies have probably cost us more money since 1792, than all our military operations on the Continent, and subsidies to our allies, united ; and the waste of our regular infantry which they have occasioned within the same period, has beyond doubt, greatly exceeded the whole collective losses of our army, by sickness or the sword, in every other service. *

* Sir William Young, has given in his late work, authentic returns, whereby it appears that out of 19,676 men, mustered

Were there no other objections to the Slave Trade, than that it is continually adding to the extent of mercantile capital, thus wastefully applied, and colonies thus dreadfully maintained, it would be a sufficient reason for its abolition. But this horrible commerce, at the same time, forms an insuperable obstacle to benign improvements in our sugar colonies; and tends to perpetuate every mischief, moral and political, that belongs to their interior system. While a slave market exists, neither wholesome laws, nor individual benevolence, will ever be able to meliorate the general lot of those wretched beings, who toil under the whips of the drivers. It would be as rational to attempt to bring a sea marsh into tillage, without first embanking against the tide.

That the propositions last advanced, are not wholly consistent with the delusive representations of self interested men, and with the prejudices of the ill-informed, I too well know; and yet I cannot consistently with the plan of the present work, proceed to demonstrate their truth. Should the grand abolition controversy not soon be shortened, by the force of those admitted principles on which it ought to be decided, the public shall ere long, be possessed of some precise

in the windward and leeward islands from 1796, to 1802, we lost by death, no less than 17,173. But this account, I apprehend, contains no part of the army employed in St. Domingo, or Jamaica; nor does it embrace the losses during the years 1793,--4, and 5, during which the yellow fever was peculiarly destructive.

See *West India Common Place Book*, page 218.

and systematic information respecting colonial slavery; and I trust then to satisfy every man who will take the pains to reason upon well established premises, that all these propositions and remarks, as to the ill effects of this commerce in the colonies, are irrefragably true. Mean time, I will rather leave them unargued to the reflections of the discerning reader, than forbear to notice such powerful considerations, among the reasons for abolishing the Slave trade.

There are other and higher views however, upon which, without assuming any thing that can be the subject of controversy or doubt, we may arrive at the same practical conclusion.

The esteem of foreign nations, is obviously of consequence to us at all times, and especially at this singular conjuncture.—We feel it to be so; for we have endeavoured to conciliate their good opinion and friendship, by very costly sacrifices. Buonaparte too, is of the same mind; for he is scarcely more intent upon ruining our commerce, than destroying our reputation on the continent; and beyond doubt, it would tend much to preclude our effectual interposition, at some future and auspicious season, between his ambition, and the remnant of Europe that has yet escaped his sword, if he could succeed in persuading the world, that we are a sordid, selfish, and unprincipled people, whose gold is their god, and who would spread desolation through the earth, for the sole purpose of extending their commerce. It might also further his present plan, of en-

gaging the powers still neutral, in a confederacy against our maritime rights.

Now who can contemplate the slave trade, without feeling, that in that point, we are justly chargeable with the very crimes which the enemy imputes to us? — It is false, that we promote wars, for the sake of our trade in Europe; but that we thus sin in Africa, is unquestionably true. It is a foul libel, that the European continent owes its present miseries to British avarice; but that the great African continent owes chiefly to that cause, miseries far greater and more durable than those of Europe, cannot fairly be denied.

Buonaparte indeed, has not accused us of the slave trade. The prejudices of which, he is the dupe, and the crimes which he has committed, have shut his mouth on that subject. But a great majority of his subjects, and of the people of all other nations, cannot but supply in their reflections, what his invectives have in this respect omitted; and when they think of the slave trade, must be prepared to believe us capable of all that he libellously imputes. Even accomplices in guilt, know how to estimate the indications which it furnishes, of the general principles of their associates. Let it be remembered too, that this is a crime, not in the contemplation of others merely, but in our own: a national iniquity, long since recorded as such, by the solemn confession of our representatives in parliament, as well as by the voices of thousands and tens of thousands of the people. Our public discussions on this subject, and

the resolutions of the Commons, in 1792, excited great attention in other nations, and no where more than in France. What then must be thought, of our having for fifteen years subsequent to that period, not only cherished the inhuman commerce which we had professed a resolution to abandon, but greatly enlarged its extent?

What is actually thought in France, we well know.—The apologists of the slave trade, as well as its enemies, accuse us of a vile hypocrisy; supposing that we meant to lead other nations into a dereliction of their share of the trade, in order that we might monopolize its profits. I am well informed, that Buonaparte mentioned his belief of our dissimulation on the subject to Mr. Fox, when in his company at Paris; and was assured by that great man, but probably without effect, that the opinion was unfounded.—No man could have repelled the charge with a better grace, than that generous statesman; one of the ruling feelings of whose heart was abhorrence of this detestable traffic. He publicly professed that he should regard its abolition as an attainment valuable enough to overpay all the labours of his life; and regretted in death nothing more deeply, than his leaving that work unfinished.

But though Mr. Fox doubtless said to the First Consul, every thing which the wish to deliver his country from so opprobrious an imputation, could suggest; he must have felt that it was not easy to explain or defend our conduct. Buonaparte probably remain-

ed unconvinced ; and wronged the sincerity of his illustrious guest, by supposing that he had less love for truth, than for the credit of his country.

That we have incurred upon this account, much odium and contempt with the French people in general, cannot be doubted. Even after the usurpation of Buonaparte, a large part of them were so averse to the infamy of repealing their own decrees against the slave trade, that a very bold stand was made against the measure in their senate; and the consul, notwithstanding the terror of his newly acquired power, found himself opposed by a minority of 27 to 54. Let us here be just to our unfortunate enemies. (unfortunate they truly are, though guilty too). Their liberty was irretrievably lost, through the crimes which it had engendered ; but they would have saved from the wreck the most generous of their reformations, if the sordid and mistaken policy of their new master, had not opposed it.

They must have felt, however, with indignation, that England, more than Buonaparte, was in fault. His advocates strenuously pleaded our example as his apology ; and the defence, it must be admitted, was far more specious, than that which some of the friends of this horrible commerce, offer upon the same principle in England. If the mistress of the ocean can plead, that she has no power to abolish the slave trade, while other nations continue to carry it on ; the same plea was much more allowable to France, who cannot in time of war, protect her colonies.

from conquest, much less their commercial laws from suspension, against her maritime and slave trading enemy. Good men indeed, and even bad men, who reason clearly, would see the absurdity of the defence in a moral view; for France could at least deliver herself from the guilt and the shame, if not Africa from the scourge, of the commerce. But considering how small a share she possessed of it, and how large a portion of it is in our hands, she could not hope in any great degree to benefit the unhappy natives of that country, by a sacrifice in which we would not concur.

It seems impossible to doubt, that our opprobrious adherence to this traffic, has added much to the popular prejudice against us in the minds of Frenchmen in general. During the last war, it naturally confirmed the apprehension, that we were, from selfish motives, enemies to their freedom and independency, for it indicated a national character consistent with such sordid feelings; and now when events have precluded that suspicion in regard to the present war, the same crime gives colour to the calumnies of Buonaparte, and prepares the people, especially the friends of the negroes among them, to believe, that we basely wage war against them for the sake of commercial spoils. Sure I am at least, that our immediate renunciation of the slave trade, would tend to open the minds of Frenchmen, to our true character; to make the war with us unpopular among them, and to lay a basis for solid reconciliation, when the spirit of

their government, and the state of Europe, shall allow of our sheathing the sword.

If we turn to America, the importance of our national character, in this particular, will be more than equally apparent. There, we certainly labour under great and unmerited reproach. The most moderate and abstemious use even of our maritime rights, is indignantly resisted; and partly from misapprehensions which we vainly attempt to remove; because they spring from a rooted conviction, that our policy is uniformly directed by narrow minded and selfish principles: It is said that we scruple not to trample on the rights of the weak and defenceless, whenever it may promote the interests of our navigation and trade. It is equally singular and mortifying, that even Mr. Randolph, and our other apologists in that Country, admit to their opponents, that we really act on such principles; contenting themselves with the argument that other nations do the same. Yet no reasonable ground or colour for such imputations, is to be found in our late treatment of the United States; except perhaps in our too lavish concessions. It is true that self-interested individuals have, for their private ends, fomented this Anti-British spirit in America, by false and injurious charges; but our general impressions of the moral character of any individual, have a powerful effect in our construction of his conduct towards us; and it is in some measure the same between nations.

There is, perhaps, no part of the world in which we have incurred so much disesteem by our conduct, in

regard to the slave trade, as in the Northern States of the American Union, in which the late resentment against us seems to have been the most prevalent ; nor is there any country, in which the abandonment of this commerce, would have a more powerful influence in our favour. May it soon be in the power of our friends in America, when they hear us taxed with rapacious principles, and a contempt for the rights of mankind, to adduce our dereliction of the slave trade, as a clear refutation of the charge.

Should we now continue to refuse this long-promised reformation, the reproach must take a deeper tinge than ever, in the eyes of all civilized nations. The Lords spiritual and temporal in Parliament assembled, have at length concurred with the Commons, in recognizing the moral turpitude of the trade, and in giving a pledge for its speedy excision, which it would be infamous not to redeem.

If it be important that our national character should be vindicated in the eyes of foreigners, not less so, that it should stand fair in our own.

Who can doubt that a high sense of national honour and virtue, a reverence, as well as love for our Country, and above all a firm reliance on the protecting power of God, are popular sentiments of great value at an arduous crisis like the present. We are called upon to make great sacrifices ; perhaps to give the last proof of fervent attachment to our country ; it is fit therefore that she should appear fair and amiable in our eyes,

and that whatever soils the lustre of her character, should be instantly wiped away.

There is indeed an attachment to the land that gave us birth, which depends on no elevated sentiments. For my part, I am not ashamed to avow a love for the very soil itself; a weakness which has made me shed tears at bidding it a long adieu, which has made me review it with transport at my return, independently of the thought of every rational object of attachment, comprised in the endearing name of Country. I blush not to confess, that, in a distant climate, the expectation of death has been embittered by the thought, that my dust would not mingle with my native soil. But the patriotism that deserves the name, is composed of nobler elements. It is a filial sense of honour and duty, animated by reverence for all that is noble and great, by affection for all that is excellent and amiable, in the society to which we belong. It looks back on the glory of our ancestors; it looks up to the dignity of the throne, it looks round on the wise and beneficent institutions, the mild and equitable laws, the freedom, the happiness, the virtue, by which the social edifice is adorned; till glowing with a generous enthusiasm it exclaims, "this is my beloved Country! I received it from my fathers; I will defend it with my blood; I will transmit it unimpaired to my children!"

If such patriotic feelings are at this awful moment peculiarly seasonable and important; let them not be chilled with the sad reflection, that this same beloved Country is polluted by the most sordid and barbarous crimes; that though dear to ourselves, she is a curse to a large portion of the globe; that her wealth gene-

rates, and her power maintains, a greater mass of human wretchedness and guilt, than even the pestilent ambition of France: perhaps than all the other political crimes of the age. "I have often thought," a pious friend who is thoroughly acquainted with the slave trade, once said to me, "that were an angel to look down from heaven, " in order to determine which of the nations of the "globe is the greatest scourge to the human species, " his eye would be arrested by Africa and the West Indies, and by those receptacles of unspeakable misery, the ships that are passing between them; " and his awful report would be, Great Britain is that merciless nation."

It is by those only who have not read and reasoned upon the subject, or who suffer themselves to be deceived by rank and inconsistent imposture, that such an estimate as this can be thought excessive. But were the dreadful effects of the crime at all disputable, not so at least its sordid and infamous nature. What rational being, who ever heard of the slave trade, can attempt to rescue it from our contempt and abhorrence?

I demand here, however, no wider concession, than that this commerce is in fact a subject of extreme detestation with a large portion of the British people; and consequently a great drawback upon that reverence, and that ardent love, for the institutions and the moral character of his Country, by which the mind of a patriot should be animated in times of danger and distress.

Let it be remembered too, that a large proportion of those who are most zealous for the abolition of the slave trade, are men of religious feelings; and who regard this

traffic as a most heinous offence, not only against man, but against God. If there be statesmen or legislators, who can reconcile to their own views of Christianity, their own erroneous and inadequate notions of the slave trade, by looking beyond the crimes and the cruelties perpetrated on the coast and on the middle passage, and even beyond the dreadful destruction of our species which ensues in the West Indies, and all the miseries of a hopeless bondage, to a supposed compensatory good ; let them consider that a large and very valuable portion of their countrymen, not only utterly disbelieve the existence of any such compensation ; but reject with horror the idea of abetting injustice, cruelty, and bloodshed, upon the principle of expediency. They even regard the deliberate admission of such a motive, as an aggravation of the crime ; because it implies that man is wiser than his Creator, whose beneficent purposes, are thus supposed to be at variance with his own commands.

I will suppose, for the argument's sake, that these men are unreasonably scrupulous ; still their own timid consciences, must give the law to their expectations of the favour or disfavour of God. Can it be doubted then, that multitudes of Englishmen, who regard the slave trade in this light, are much disheartened and alarmed by that atrocious national sin ? Can they hope as confidently, in the benignant dispositions of Providence for the safety of their Country, as if she were guiltless of innocent blood ? On the contrary, many of them are much more intimidated by our persevering provocation of divine justice in the slave trade, than by all the burthens and all the visible dangers of the war.

It alarms them more, and in the event of actual invasion, would tend more to damp that confidence so essential in the breast of a soldier, than all the victories of Buonaparte.

In the name then of this large portion of my fellow subjects, than whom none love their Country more, than whom none are more ready to abide all extremities in her defence ; in the name of those who worship God among us, and admit no pleas of expediency against his holy laws ; I earnestly implore from Parliament the immediate abolition of the slave trade.

God forbid, however, that I should dissemble on this sacred subject ; and it would be dissimulation to state the uneasiness of religious minds on account of this great offence, without adding, that I think they are justly alarmed.

Yes ! I will dare to avow an opinion, that the public calamities with which we have been so remarkably visited, ever since the iniquities of this commerce were laid open to the national conscience, and reformation was callously withheld, have been chastisements for that odious cause.

It cannot be necessary to apologize, in a land called Christian, for assuming in times like the present, that we have incurred the anger of heaven ; or for humbly inquiring by what offences, that anger is most likely to have been excited. At an æra so portentous and alarming, the Atheist indeed, if there be such a character among us, may behold with a stupid stare the machinery of second causes, without raising his thoughts to that Providence by which it is directed ; but all who believe, that " verily and indeed there is a God who

" governs the earth ;" and especially the sincere Christian, will recognize in the afflicting prodigies of the age, the hand of the Most High,

That the good or evil destinies of nations, are often the retributory appointments of divine justice or bounty, no man who believes in the scriptures can doubt : " A fruitful land maketh he barren for the wickedness of them that dwell therein." A thousand passages in holy writ might be cited to the same effect ; as well as multitudes of examples there recorded of public calamities, which were expressly imposed as punishments for national sins,

What indeed can be more consonant to our views of the divine government, whether derived from revealed or natural religion, than such retributory justice ? Kingdoms have no world to come ; communities of men will not, as such, stand collectively, before the judgment seat of Christ. If then, it pleases the Almighty in his temporal providence, often to punish and reward in a remarkable manner, the vices and virtues of individuals ; we may reason from analogy (that best natural interpreter of the unseen works of God) to the probability that Nations, will sometimes be made to illustrate in the same way, his justice, power, and mercy.

It would be easy to shew, that there is in fact a close analogy in what is called the ordinary course of providence, between the divine government of states, and of private persons. Their virtues equally tend to prosperity and long life ; their vices to misery and dissolution. If the decline and fall of nations may generally be dated from the period of their highest attain-

ments in arts and luxury, that is also the period of their most heinous offences against God ; and however opposite the proposition may be to ordinary notions, their most cruel sins against man also. But I must abstain at present from abstract discussions like these ; and rely, as it is right to do in such cases, on the express testimony of inspiration.

In the particular case in question, I might fortify my remarks if necessary, by the authority of our national church. We have been repeatedly enjoined, on days of fasting and humiliation, to acknowledge that the calamities and dangers of the times, are appointments of divine providence, on account of our national sins. The rulers of our Church, have not indeed attempted to point out to us the particular offences which call for reformation. Spiritual admonition from the pulpit, is in the present age, of a general kind. But it is not less the right and the duty of individuals, to give a particular and practical application to these pious reproofs. It is obvious that a distinct conception of our sins, whether private or public, must be a necessary prelude to a sincere and efficacious repentance.

We have no prophet to declare to us the causes of the displeasure of heaven ; but conscience may enable us to discover them ; and if we fairly apply the examples and the declarations contained in the holy scriptures, to the case in question, we shall inquire in the proper way for its solution ; and with a well-founded hope of success.

What can be more suitable to every exalted conception of the divine nature, than the causes which are most frequently assigned in scripture for the chastise-

ment of sinful nations? They are, for the most part, the sins of oppression, injustice, and violence towards the poor and helpless; and the shedding of innocent blood. The offence of idolatry itself among the chosen people, was not more frequently denounced than these; nor more severely punished.

The passages of scripture which might be cited to this effect are numberless; and it is perhaps only weakening the general effect of the remark, to adduce examples of them. Yet for the satisfaction of those who are not sufficiently conversant with the Bible, I offer a few in the annexed note.*

The Almighty declared himself offended even with those solemn Fasts, which were intended to avert his indignation, while oppression was unreformed. “ Is it
 “ such a fast that I have chosen? a day for a man to
 “ afflict his soul? is it to bow down his head as a bul-
 “ rush, and to spread sackcloth under him? wilt thou
 “ call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the Lord?
 “ Is not this the fast that I have chosen; to loose the
 “ bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens,
 “ and to let the oppressed go free, and that you break
 “ every yoke?”

Not less clear to the same effect, are the exhortations of the prophet Jeremiah. “ Execute ye judgment and
 “ righteousness, and deliver the spoiled out of the hand
 “ of the oppressor; and do no wrong, do no violence to
 “ the stranger, and the fatherless, nor the widow,
 “ neither shed innocent blood.”

* “ For thus hath the Lord of Hosts said: Hew ye down trees
 “ and cast a mount against Jerusalem. This is the city to be
 “ visited; she is wholly oppression in the midst of her; violence

These, however, and a thousand such admonitions were slighted by the offending people ; and what was the effect ? An invading sword was sent through the guilty land, its throne and its altars were overturned, and its surviving inhabitants, were dragged away by a merciless conqueror, to groan in their turn under oppression, and to illustrate in a miserable captivity, the retaliating justice of God.

Were we, with such scriptural precedents and explanations of the ways of the Almighty before us, to search for the causes of the apparent displeasure of

“ and spoil is heard in her ; before me continually is grief and wounds.” Jeremiah vi. 6, 7.

“ Make a chain ; for the land is full of bloody crimes, and the city is full of violence : Wherefore I will bring the worst of the heathen, and they shall possess their houses.” Ezekiel vii. 23-4.

“ Therefore thus saith the Lord ; Ye have not hearkened unto me in proclaiming liberty every one to his brother, and every man to his neighbour : behold I proclaim a liberty for you, saith the Lord, to the sword, to the pestilence, and to the famine ; and I will make you to be removed with all the kingdoms of the earth.” Jeremiah xxxiv. 17.

“ The children also of Judah, and the children of Jerusalem, have ye sold unto the Grecians, that ye might remove them far from their border.” “ Behold, I will raise them up out of the place whither ye have sold them ; and will return your recompence upon your own head.” “ And I will sell your sons and your daughters into the hand of the children of Judah, and they shall sell them to the Sabeans, to a people far off : for the Lord hath spoken it,” Joel iii. 6, 7—8.

“ Because thou hast spoiled many nations, all the remnant of the people shall spoil thee ; because of men’s blood, and for the violence of the land, of the city, and of all that dwell therein.” “ Wo to him that coveteth an evil covetousness to his house, that he may set his nest on high, that he may be delivered from the power of evil.” “ Thou hast consulted shame to thy house by

Heaven; it would be natural to turn our eyes towards the Slave trade, on account of the specific character of the guilt which it involves; even if its enormous magnitude, did not pre-eminently challenge attention. If rapine, oppression, violence to the poor, the stranger, and the destitute; dishonest gain, and the effusion of innocent blood, be put in inquest against England, where will they be found but in the Slave trade; except indeed in its associated iniquity, the dreadful slavery of our colonies?

I know there are many who suppose us to be merciless oppressors in the East Indies, as well as the West, But if the suspicion be applied to our treatment of the

“ cutting off many people, and hast sinned against thy soul,”
“ For the stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the
“ timber shall answer it.” “ Wo to him that buildeth a town
“ with blood, and establisheth a city by iniquity.” Habakkuk ii.

§—12.

“ The people of the land have used oppression, and exercised
“ robbery, and have vexed the poor and needy; yea they have op-
“ pressed the stranger wrongfully.” “ Therefore have I poured
“ out mine indignation upon them, I have consumed them with
“ the fire of my wrath; their own way have I recompensed upon
“ their heads, saith the Lord.” Ezekiel xxii. 29-31.

“ Behold therefore I have smitten mine hand at thy dishonest
“ gain which thou hast made, and at thy blood which hath been
“ in the midst of thee.” Ezekiel xxii. 13.

“ By the multitude of thy merchandize they have filled the
“ midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned: therefore I
“ will destroy thee.” “ Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries by the
“ multitude of thy iniquities, by the iniquity of thy traffic: there-
“ fore will I bring forth a fire from the midst of thee, it shall de-
“ stroy thee, and I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth, &c.—
“ and thou shall be a terror, and never shall thou be any more.”
Ezekiel xxviii. 18, 19.



poor, or the great mass of the people; it is utterly unfounded. There is no slavery in the dominions of the East India Company, unless the condition of a few domestic life servants, may deserve the name; and even these are so treated, that their bondage can scarcely be distinguished from freedom. But the labouring classes of the community, are in general free; nay, for the most part, the agricultural labourers till their own household lands; for which they pay a fixed and very moderate rent. In no part of India are they so happy in this respect, as within the British territories; and if the native Princes have ever had cause to complain of us, to their subjects, at least, it has been an advantage and a blessing, to be transferred to the government of the Company. I heartily wish we were as innocent of neglecting their moral, and spiritual improvement, as of impairing their temporal welfare.*

If we cast our eyes around us in this happy island, there is still less matter of charge against the national conscience on the score of violence and oppression. In no other part of the globe, are the poor and helpless so well protected by the laws, or so humanely used by their superiors. Nor are the laws chargeable with injustice towards the less fortunate peasantry of our sister island; though here perhaps, there is much that ought to be reformed. If the Legislature be now culpable in regard to Ireland, it is for omission and neglect; rather than for positive wrong; nor does the fault arise from any of those unrighteous

* It is but just to say, that the late Governor-General Marquis Wellesley, was very laudably disposed to promote the religious instruction of the natives.

principles, or from that oppressive use of power, which are so peculiarly offensive to Heaven.

If therefore we are suffering for such offences as have usually provoked the scourge of the Most High, if it be as the protector of the poor and destitute, that God has entered into judgment with us, we must I repeat, look to Africa, and to the West Indies, for the causes of his wrath. But the magnitude of the crimes of the Slave Trade, still more than their specific character, will conduct us to the same conclusion.

Near 37,000 unhappy men, women, and children, are yearly carried by us from their native land to a far distant country; there to perish prematurely; or to end their days in hopeless captivity and bondage.* They have given us no offence; they have, for the most part, committed no crime even against their countrymen, worthy of exile or slavery; the motive of our transporting them, is pure undefecated avarice. Yet by our hands, and by our procurement, the dearest ties of nature are barbarously rent asunder; the husband is dragged from the arms of his wife, the innocent child from the bosom of its parents, and the cries of their agonized feelings are ended only by the silence of despair. At this moment, ten thousand shrieks and

* The number of Slaves carried from Africa in 1804, in ships cleared out from Great Britain, supposing their cargoes to have equalled, and not exceeded, the numbers limited by law, was 36,899. (See Sir W. Young's West India Common Place Book, page 8.) This account, however, comprises the Slave ships *trading under British colours* only. If the British Slave Trade, carried on under American and Danish colours, prior to the Act of last Session, were included, the dreadful amount of the human victims immolated at the shrine of our national avarice, would be greatly enlarged.

groans, uttered by the helpless victims of British violence, are entering the ear of the Most High, the righteous judge of the whole earth, and demanding vengeance against us.

While our slave ships, like hungry vultures, hover continually over the coasts of that hapless continent, dreadful are the horrors in the interior by which their victims are prepared.

The exportable slavery of Africa, is for the most part, the produce only of crimes, which we directly or indirectly stimulate the wretched natives to commit ; and by our means, every species of misery, is continually propagated through the greater part of that vast continent. Treachery, false accusation, man-stealing, midnight rapine, and conflagration, are ordinary means, by which in aid of that more copious source, captivity in war, our demand for slaves is supplied ; and while by the frequency of these crimes, man becomes to man a greater terror than the lion of the desert, to the destruction of all innocent commerce, and civil intercourse between individuals ; frequent and dreadful wars are kindled between their petty states, for the sole purpose of obtaining captives to barter with our merchants, for the arms and luxuries of Europe.

Nor is war only increased in point of frequency ; its horrid features are rendered far more dreadful, by the same detestable motive.—Populous villages are beset at midnight, by armed bands, who after killing all that make resistance, carry off, to a more dreadful fate, such of their prisoners as are fit for servitude ; leaving of course to perish, all who from age or infirmity, depended upon the more vigorous for support.

That this description of the sources of exportable slavery is strictly true, all who will take the trouble of reading the most decisive public evidence, may be fully convinced. Their effects on the state of manners and society in Africa may be easily conceived: and where man is made at once so wretched and so guilty, it may scarcely excite additional horror, to reflect what enormous and various destruction of human life, must directly, or collaterally result, from the same detestable commerce. This murderous waste however, is of far greater extent than the uninformed suppose. Many of the unhappy captives, are brought to the shores of the Atlantic from very remote parts of the interior country, and in their way have extensive deserts to pass, where so many external hardships and sufferings are added to the anguish of their minds, that of those who originally set out for the coast, a great number perish miserably on the journey.*

Exportable slavery then, is not only the fruit of atrocious crimes, and exquisite wretchedness; but this fruit is not, and from the nature of the case cannot, be thriftily gathered. The hapless country, for every bondsman placed in the hold of a slave ship, is deprived of much more than a single life.

But a still further waste of human existence takes place in that foul prison itself. The mortality on the short passage which ensues, among persons chiefly in the prime of life, is by the last accounts equal to five in every hundred; even when the excesses of a blind

* Some truly shocking illustrations of this truth may be found in Mr. Park's travels.

and merciless avarice are controuled by the regulations of the acts made to limit the carrying trade.*

Much greater proportions of the slaves which arrive in the West Indies, are confessedly brought to an untimely and speedy death, by the *seasoning*, or training to compulsory labour, in our islands; † and on the whole, it may fairly be calculated, that not less than three human beings are directly, or indirectly sacrificed in Africa, on the middle passage, and in the West Indies, in order to place a single seasoned negro upon a sugar plantation.

Such is the murderous nature of this intercourse with Africa, which opprobriously to the character of commerce, is known by the name of the slave trade.

If we were to compute the homicides which it has produced since we first embarked in it, the amount would almost exceed credibility. Perhaps it would be no extravagant, though a horrible proposition, that a sword of divine vengeance which should utterly extirpate

* Sir W. Young's West India Common Place Book, p. 10.

† By a public document, in the possession of his Majesty's Ministers, it appears that in Trinidad a full moiety of between eight and nine thousand imported negroes had perished in two years. To enable the reader to conceive the complicated miseries which brought them to their end, it would be necessary to give much, and very shocking information, respecting the settlement of new lands in the West Indies.

It is reported that a great number of Chinese have lately been carried, by whose procurement I know not, to that island. It is impossible here to expose the false views on which such an expedient to settle the new lands by free labourers has been built; but I seize this opportunity to protest publicly against it, as a preposterous and cruel experiment.

the whole population of England, would hardly exact more than life for life, for the innocent African blood with which we are justly chargeable.*

* Mr. Edwards, estimates the total import of negroes into the British colonies, from 1680 to 1786, at 2,130,000, but admits that this is much less than was commonly supposed; and it may, I conceive, be reasonably taken at three millions. In 1787, the importation was 21,023. *History of West Indies*, vol. 2, book 4, chap. 2.) From 1795 to 1804, the numbers carried from Africa in British ships, were 380,893. (*West India Common Place Book*, page 8.) and these may be presumed to have been chiefly carried to colonies then in our possession; because our foreign slave trade was, during that period, chiefly carried on under American and other neutral colours.

I cannot immediately refer to any authentic information as to the state of the trade during the two last years, or during the years from 1788 to 1794 inclusive; but as it has progressively increased during the last twenty years, it will be a very moderate estimate to take the importation in the years last preceding each of those periods, as the average of the whole. The importation in 1787, therefore, being 21,023, that in seven years to the end of 1794, was at least 147,151; and the importation of 1804 being 36,899, we must add 73,798 for the two last years. We have thus

Prior to 1786	-	-	3,000,000
In 1787	-	-	21,023
From 1787 to 1794 inclusive			147,151
From that time to 1804			380,893
In 1805 and 1806	-	-	73,798

Total 3,622,865 imported into the

British colonies.

How many of these have prematurely perished by the seasoning, or from the subsequent effects of West India slavery, cannot be ascertained; but we may guess at it from the following data. Mr. Edwards asserts, that from authentic lists of entries in his possession, there were imported into Jamaica, from 1703 to 1786, 610,000 negroes, and we canot suppose less than 100,000 to have been on the island at the commencement of that period. From 1786, to the end

It would be quite incompatible with the necessary

of 1792, the numbers imported, on the ordinary proportion which Jamaica has had of the whole British trade, could not be less than 30,000. These numbers together would give, supposing the births to equal the deaths, a population at the end of 1792 of 740,600 slaves; whereas Mr. Edwards publishing in June 1793, estimated their numbers at 250,000, being less by 490,600, than the numbers imported; and even this, was near 40,000 more than the amount of the last poll tax returns. (See History of Jamaica, vol. i. book 2, chap. 5.) The loss, therefore, in this island, would be near two-thirds of the whole number imported, if it were not for a deduction that is due on account of the numbers re-exported; which Mr. Edwards estimates to have been in Jamaica, about one-fifth part of the import. Allowing, by this rule, 128,120 to have been re-exported, the loss will be reduced to 362,480, or nearly one half.

It may perhaps be objected, that in the long period here taken, a great proportion of the whole number imported, must have died, even under the mildest treatment, and under circumstances the more favorable to longevity; and that the calculation, therefore, for the most part, only proves that the births have not equalled the deaths.

But I answer first, that it is impossible to suppose the growth of native population to have been kept down by any means, that have not at the same time shortened the lives of the adults; especially considering how extremely prolific negroes are in other places, under far less favorable circumstances of climate and local situation. Secondly, that it is an error to suppose that the difference between the numbers imported, and the remaining population, constitutes the whole loss by mortality. On the contrary, the numbers of children, born and prematurely cut off, during so long a period, in an old settled island like Jamaica, may be fairly supposed to have much more than equalled the whole import. While we deduct then from the amount of a mortality produced by oppression among the parents, we must add to that which was produced by the same cause among the children.

limits of this work to state even in the most summary

Nor is it an answer to say, that a great proportion of infants every where perish without attaining to maturity ; for such a surplus of births is also found, where oppression does not exist, as more than equals the loss, and makes the rising greatly exceed the declining generation.

It is true, that among new-imported negroes the males shamefully outnumber the females ; but let it be put on the other side of the account that these are almost all in the prime of life, when added to the ancient stock.

If with all the blights to which infancy is subject, and all the barrenness of age, the grove of human society is still elsewhere full of leaves from shoots of its natural growth, what luxuriance of foliage would the transplantation of such multitudes of exotic seedlings in their full bearing have produced, had they found a genial soil.

If after all, such objections should be allowed to diminish the tale of actual murder, a more than equal addition might be made on the latter view to the dreadful character of the system. It has probably hindered the increase of our species, by four times the number of millions that it has directly destroyed.

The mortality in new settled colonies, is notoriously far greater than in such as like Jamaica, have been long in cultivation ; and therefore if a moiety of the imported Negroes have prematurely perished in that island, to suppose that the same proportion of all the slaves brought to our colonies in general, has met the same fate, will be probably far too low an estimate.—If so, we are guilty of the blood as well as the misery, of above one million eight hundred thousand of our fellow-beings, by premature mortality, the effects of their rigorous bondage, in our colonies alone.

But the dreadful account by no means ends here : for we have to add the great numbers lost upon the passage, and on the coast, prior to their departure from it, which during the long period that preceded the Slave Carrying Acts, was probably at least 15 per cent. and we have next to widen the basis of computation, by the whole amount of our trade di-

manner, the dreadful oppression to which the unhappy expatriated Africans are doomed, in the colonies to which we carry them. A subject so copious, so important, so much misrepresented, and so little understood, requires to be illustrated in a treatise of no small extent, confined to that single object: and such a treatise I have already promised to submit to the public, unless the interests of humanity should happily cease to demand it. Meantime I will in general affirm, that our sins against that devoted race in the New World, would even exceed those with which we are justly chargeable in Africa, were it not for the consideration that they are much less generally

rectly from Africa to foreign colonies, or with foreign ships on the coast. This has always borne a large proportion to the whole of our colonial imports. By the tables furnished by Sir W. Young in his recent work, it appears, that at the two different periods to which his account of our foreign Slave Trade relates, viz. 1787 and 1802, it comprised near 4-7ths parts of all our exports from Africa. And of 20,658 Slaves supplied to foreign colonies in the latter year, only 5389 were re-exported from British Islands. —On the whole, it may be very moderately computed that we have sent from Africa, including the vast numbers that used to be sold by our ships on the coast to the French and other foreigners, two thirds as many in all as we have imported into British Colonies; and therefore if we have carried directly to the latter 3,622, 865, we have probably expatriated in all, above six millions of these unhappy fellow-creatures. Let the loss on the passage, and in the foreign colonies, upon this additional multitude be reckoned, and then let us take into the account the enormous waste of life that must have been produced in Africa, in the reducing by war, by conflagration, massacre and all our other ordinary manufactories in that country, six millions of people in the prime of life, into a state of exportable bondage. When the whole of these dreadful items are put together, the conjecture in the text will perhaps appear to be no excessive estimate.

known in this country, and therefore less deeply affect the consciences of the people at large

If the guilt of the slave trade, in respect of the nature of the offence itself, be enormous, how much more when we consider the peculiar obligations which we have long owed as a nation to a bénignant providence.

Who are the people that have provoked God thus heinously, but the same who are among all the nations of the earth, the most eminently indebted to his bounty? He has given to us an unexampled portion of civil liberty; and we in return, drag his rational creatures into a most severe and perpetual bondage. Social happiness has been showered upon us with singular profusion; and we tear from oppressed millions every social, nay almost every human comfort. In short, we cruelly reverse in our treatment of these unhappy brethren, all the gracious dealings of God towards ourselves. For our plenty we give them want; for our ease, intolerable toil; for our wealth, privation of the right of property; for our equal laws, unbridled violence and wrong. Science shines upon us, with her meridian beams; yet we keep these degraded fellow-creatures, in the deepest shades of ignorance and barbarity. Morals and manners, have happily distinguished us from the other nations of Europe; yet we create and cherish in two other quarters of the globe, an unexampled depravity of both. A contrast still more opprobrious remains. God has blessed us with the purest effulgence of the Gospel; and yet we dishonour by our slave trade the christian name; and perpetuate the darkness of paganism among millions of our fellow-creatures.

At this time of war, and impending danger, other strik-

ing contrasts arise, between the treatment which we have long received from the Almighty, and that which we give to our poor African brethren. He has girt our isle with a bulwark which for ages has not been broken; war has scarcely during a century and a half, a brief and slight civil contest or two, excepted, visited our happy soil; and its horrors for the most part have been too remote, to excite even a fear of its contact. To devastation by foreign armies, we have been strangers for many centuries. In short, our domestic exemption from the miseries of war, has been perhaps unparalleled among nations. But the eye of an all-seeing God, beholds in Africa, a contrast dreadful indeed; and of which much favoured Britain is the chief, as well as most guilty, author. There, the wretched villager can at no time lay down his head in safety, secure from being, before the rising sun, the victim of a predatory invasion. To fill our slave ships, the sword, the fire arms which we furnish, and the torch of midnight conflagration, ravage that hapless land; and war, in its terrors at least, if not in its actual inflictions, is nearly incessant. By Britain, both the arms and the motives are supplied; by Britain, those horrid consequences of captivity, eternal exile and bondage, are chiefly inflicted. The commerce, the maritime energies, which to ourselves impart security, and internal peace; are in our hands, the instruments of unspeakable misery to helpless and unoffending millions.

Do we shudder at the idea of those calamities which a successful invasion would bring upon our country? They would, as I have faintly attempted to shew, be indeed dreadful; and a united people should prepare to make every sacrifice, and to encounter every danger, by which they may be aver-

ted. But while we contemplate these menaced evils ; while we deprecate them in our closets, and in the house of God ; let conscience fairly suggest to us what more dreadful invasions we are hourly abetting in Africa ! how much worse than even French bondage, is the captivity which we multiply, and perpetuate among her innocent children ! May the merciful disposer of all events, avert from us, guilty though we are, the horrors of a foreign yoke ! but let not those who can, and will not, deliver us from the impious crime of the slave trade, join in this prayer for our country ; lest it should from their lips offend, rather than propitiate, the just Governor of the world.

The obstinate adherence to this crime, with which we have too long been chargeable, is another aggravation by which Divine justice may be reasonably supposed to have been provoked ; for perseverance in guilt, after admonitions to reform it, has in what we know of the course of Providence towards nations, been usually added to the offence, before the scourge has been inflicted.

The iniquities of the slave trade are of ancient date. During a long course of years it has been a standing crime of England to export Negroes from Africa, and sell them into a cruel bondage in the colonies.

But of a stubborn and obdurate mind, long perseverance in a particular sin is not conclusive evidence. An inveterate, as well as a recent, criminal habit, may have had its origin in ignorance, or heedlessness : and if conscience has at first been blind, or inadvertent, the error is more likely to be confirmed, than diminished by the length of the sinful practice.* The divine justice and mercy,

* It is well known, that Queen Elizabeth was persuaded, that the Negroes, carried from Africa to her colonies, were voluntary emigrants ; and expressed a pious horror at the idea of taking them by force.

Therefore, we 'most clearly vindicated, when to long forbearance, awakening expostulation is added, prior to the avenging stroke. Accordingly, we are told that Noah preached righteousness to his contemporaries, prior to the overwhelming deluge. We find Lot expostulating with the inhabitants of Sodom, before the fall of the avenging fire from heaven. Moses and Aaron were sent repeatedly to admonish the Egyptians, and to demand the dismission of the oppressed Israelites, before the various plagues which fell upon that devoted land, successively chastised its contumacy. Above all, the dreadful scourges which were inflicted upon the stiff-necked, though chosen race, were always preceded by an open exposition of their sins, and earnest calls to repentance, till at last the warning voice of the Messiah himself, loudly denounced those full-blown iniquities, which were consummated by their rejection of that sacred Monitor, and were soon after punished by a terrible destruction.—Amidst so many signal examples of this righteous mode of dealing of the Most High, we have one, in which the obduracy of the human heart relented, and the uplifted scourge was withdrawn; for at the preaching of Jonas, Nineveh repented and was spared.

In alarming conformity to these scriptural precedents, will be found the conduct of Providence towards this long favoured nation, upon the hypothesis that severe chastisements for the guilt of the Slave Trade, have been already felt, and that still severer are now approaching.

The extreme wickedness of our African commerce, and of the colonial oppressions which it generates, were, till about 19 years ago, but little known to the British public at large; and even our most intelligent Statesmen and Sena-

tors, had but imperfect conceptions, of the number and extent of those foul crimes which British subjects had long been perpetrating against the Negro race, upon both sides of the Atlantic.—The mode of procuring Slaves in Africa, and the horrid effects of our enormous and increasing demand for them, in that ill-fated region, were distinctly known only to the obscure and sordid individuals immediately engaged in that opprobrious traffic.—Some crude notions prevailed, that men were unjustly torn from their native land in Africa, and oppressed in the West India Islands; but the detail and the extent of their wrongs, were uninvestigated and unknown. It was not clearly understood, that multitudes of cruel murderers were chargeable upon the British nation, as the ordinary effects of the Slave Trade.

“ The times of this ignorance God winked at.”

It pleased him in the inscrutable counsels of his providence, wherein compensations for temporal evil, rich enough to make its permission just, and beneficent, are reserved for the virtuous sufferer, that the cruelties of our traders and colonists, should be long shrouded in obscurity, and unarraigned at the national bar.

But the greatness and suddenness of the light, was at length as remarkable as the long duration of the darkness.—In the year 1787, the wrongs of the oppressed Africans, forcibly attracted the attention, and excited the compassion of some able and eminent men. Their case was powerfully stated to the public, and still more powerfully brought into parliament. The moral feelings of the nation were appealed to, and the appeal was at first very favourably received.—Pity, remorse, and indignation, were almost universally inspired; except, indeed, among that

too large and powerful proportion of our fellow subjects, whose private interests and connections, or prejudices born of such influence, bound them to the side of the colonies.

This appeal to the national conscience, was not supported merely by the exertions of individuals, or by private and hasty examinations of the case. Obvious and seemingly irresistible, though the moral considerations were that demanded an abolition of the slave trade, it was made the subject of deep and long investigation. The great inquests of the Crown, and the People; the Privy Council, and House of Commons, went into elaborate inquiries respecting the nature and extent of those crimes, whereof the nation stood arraigned by some of its most respectable members: and while evidence was received on the part of the accusers, every opportunity was given to those who profited by the alleged iniquities, to deny, extenuate, or excuse them. Even the immediate perpetrators of those crimes, were received as witnesses in their own favour. A denial upon the word of an African Trader, or West India Proprietor, of any charge by which his own interest and character were assailed, was admitted as freely, as the testimony of those who were liable to no selfish bias.

Inquiry therefore, if not impartial, was at least, not partial to the accusers—Yet what was the result?

To state the substance of the evidence, even in the most compendious form, would be to demand the perusal of a large volume, upon a subject not likely I fear to obtain the attention which it pre-eminently deserves, at this alarming juncture.—But the general effect, is sufficient for my purpose, and may be briefly told. The slave-trade was condemned in the House of Commons, the only branch of the

Legislature that gave an early opinion upon the evidence, in the most deliberate and satisfactory way. That immediate reformation was not voted, is a lamentable truth; but the reprobation of the Slave trade upon moral principles, was not on that account less decisive, as a parliamentary verdict, of its iniquity. It was even more so perhaps, than had the just practical consequence been instantly adopted. There were enemies enough to virtuous reformation, to carry a vote for delay; but even these, with the exception of a self-interested few, were as strongly of opinion that the abolition of the trade was a moral duty, as their opponents: nay, they admitted, that even the imperious motives of a supposed political necessity, the ground upon which they voted against an immediate reform, would not justify the suspension of the measure beyond a period of eight or ten years.

To those who cannot, or will not, undertake the laborious task of examining the printed evidence, more complete satisfaction as to the enormity of this national crime cannot be offered, than arises from the confessions of those senators by whose votes it was protracted. Does any man doubt that the slave trade is a system of gigantic guilt, let him go to their speeches for conviction. The talents of some of these men were very eminent, their diligence extreme, their sceptical dexterity in political discussions characteristically great. Can it be believed then, that they would have conceded to their opponents, ground so formidably strong, as the admission of the moral duty of terminating this traffic at an early period, if the effect of the evidence before the House had not irresistibly demanded such a concession? Were the guilt of a convict, whose execution had been respited, matter of doubt, what could

the stronger satisfaction than to say, that the friends at whose earnest solicitation his life had for a while been spared, had confessed the justice of the sentence ; and petitioned for no more than a temporary stay of execution ?

While the nature and magnitude of this grand inquiry, were thus uncontestedly established in point of evidence, it pleased Heaven, to aid the effect which the display of its hideous features was fitted to produce, by various modes of direct and strong expostulation. Not only was a flood of light poured upon the conscience of the nation, which before lay sleeping in darkness, but a voice clear and loud, as ever spoke without miracle to man, called upon it to awake, and escape from the judgments of God. From the happy texture of our constitution, the public mind has many organs, through which knowledge, political as well as moral, can be conveyed with peculiar facility ; and through them all, were the People of England addressed upon this occasion, in the most impressive manner. In Parliament, the call for reformation, was supported by a concert of splendid talents, such as perhaps was never employed before, in the support of any national measure ! Nor was the credit of high station, wanting to give weight to the persuasions of eloquence ; though its official influence, was fatally withheld.

Supposing it to have been the will of God, that the result of this grand investigation should furnish clear evidence of our sinful character as a people, it is not difficult to discover, why while such strong expostulation was addressed to the Commons, both in and out of Parliament, the influence of Government was neutralized, through an opposition in sentiment which prevailed between different Members

of the Cabinet. Certain it is, that the theory of our constitution, was in this case followed in practice, with a much closer correspondence than is usual; and perhaps than is generally expedient; and that there never was known in Parliament upon any question of equal interest and importance, since the influence of the Crown succeeded to the awe of prerogative, so absolute a neutrality on the part of the Administration.

The call thus fairly, and thus solemnly, made upon the Parliament and People of England, though admitted to be just, has not hitherto alas! led to repentance. Like Pharaoh, we promised for a moment to let the people go; but like him, we speedily relapsed, and persevered in following the counsels of national avarice, in defiance of that voice of conscience, which is the undoubted messenger of God. Our public affront to the Majesty of Heaven, in this view, exceeded that of Pharaoh; for he appears to have doubted, till convinced by repeated plagues, that Moses spoke by Divine authority; whereas Christians, could not question the authority of those sacred principles, with the practical demands of which we nevertheless refused to comply.

I have not time to examine those strange and inconsistent excuses, that were offered by some respectable individuals in Parliament, for withholding immediate reformation. They were not only unsound in moral principle, but founded on assumptions of premises that are demonstrably untrue; and most of their authors have since, either actively or passively, departed in conduct from those practical conclusions to which their own arguments led. — But no man can read the Parliamentary debates on the Slave Trade, without perceiving the chief motives upon which the majority acted. The sordid consideration of commercial expediency, was

in reality the ground upon which the solemn call upon the national conscience was effectually repelled ; and moral principle, was deliberately sacrificed by a national assembly, upon the altar of public interest.

Now what was this, but a public and systematic defiance of the authority of God ?—Had the alleged notion of effects compensatory in point of humanity, that most specious, though preposterous plea, been ever so sincere, and well founded ; still such a perseverance in acknowledged iniquity, would have been opprobrious to a Christian legislature ; and, as I believe, without a precedent in any age or nation.—If individuals, in aiming to produce good by a breach of the divine law, contract presumptuous guilt ; more obviously still may it be pronounced of nations, in such cases, that “ their condemnation is just.” In public morals, still more than in private, an infraction of acknowledged principles of the divine law, is ill compensated by any imaginary good consequence, while it is peculiarly affronting to the Majesty of heaven ; for this false principle, always implies that God is not the best judge of the tendency of his own institutions ; and when irreverence to the Deity, finds admission into senatorial assemblies, the example must be fatal indeed.

Murder, let it be remembered ; deliberate, cruel, and wide-extended murder, is an indisputable, though by no means the only sin, continually produced by the Slave trade. Thousands of innocent lives rapidly destroyed, and tens of thousands consequentially, and most miserably wasted, are annual fruits of our African commerce : yet this, and still deeper guilt, is openly persisted in by the vote of a British parliament, for the sake of the supposed

temporal good to be produced by it, and the temporal evils that are feared from reformation.

We even aggravated this violation of the law of God by alleging as motives of perseverance in it, the interests of our navigation and trade. The singular resolution of a Christian legislature, to prosecute for years to come, a career of acknowledged oppression and blood-shed, upon principles of national convenience, seems to amount to a sin, which not only in its degree, but in its kind, is unprecedented and enormous. It is a contumacious denial of the supremacy of God; a kind of high treason against the Majesty of Heaven.

What made the massacres in the streets of Dublin some years ago, different in the species of crime, from ordinary murders, but the traitorous principle on which they were perpetrated? The rebels had not yet enthroned a usurper, or erected a republic; neither have we yet set up the image of Commerce in St. Paul's Cathedral; but we carry slaughter among the innocent subjects of the King of Heaven, as Emmitt and his followers, among the subjects of an earthly King, in open contempt of his laws; because there is an object of disloyal attachment in our hearts, which we avowedly prefer to our allegiance. We say, "It is true O God, thy laws are good, but the laws of commercial policy are better---We must continue, for a while at least, to violate thy most solemn commandments, and to destroy, as well as oppress, thy rational creatures; because we can no otherwise preserve our commerce, our colonial interests, and navigation."

There remains one further scriptural characteristic of those crimes, by which the penal doom of nations has been sealed.—I mean the perverse and audacious extension,

of that very iniquity, which has been the recent subject of divine expostulation, and of a neglected call to repentance.

“ They be idle—therefore they cry, saying, Let us go and sacrifice to our God,—let there more work be laid upon the men, that they may labour therein.”—

“ Ye shall no more give the people straw to make brick as heretofore;—let them go and gather straw for themselves.” (Exodus, chap. v. ver. 7, 8, 9.)—Such was Pharaoh’s answer to that demand of God, “ Let my people go, that they may serve me;” and thus did he audaciously straiten those bands of oppression which he was commanded to relax.—The same infatuated Monarch, enhanced the guilt of his contumacy, even after he had been repeatedly chastised. Immediately before the slaughter of the first-born, the last and decisive plague, he drove the messenger of God finally from his presence, “ Get thee from me; take heed to thyself, see my face no more: for in that day thou seest my face thou shalt die.” And Moses said, “ thou hast well spoken,—I will see thy face no more.” Exodus, chap. xxviii. ver. 29.

It was not possible for Great Britain, exactly to follow the first part of this precedent, by increasing the labour of her West India bondmen. *They* were already making bricks without straw; and oppression in our colonies, had long produced an effect, for which a bloody mandate to the Egyptian midwives was found to be necessary, in the far milder bondage of the Israelites.—The poor Negroes, who have no land of Goshen, no flocks, or herds, to be the subjects of divine protection, no fleshpots of Egypt, to sustain them, and who have, instead of task-masters, and a tale of bricks, drivers armed with whips, to urge forward their toil; could experience as the fruit of rejected inter-

cession, no exacerbation of their fate.—Neither could slave making in Africa, be conducted with greater fraud and ferocity, than our white and black agents already employed and abetted, except through an extension of the trade.

But what we could do in defiance of omnipotent justice, dreadful to think! we did. If we could not make our colonial bondmen more wretched, we could add to their numbers. We could also enlarge the local domains of that abominable system, of which the dreadful nature and effects were now for the first time understood, and laid bare to the national eye. We could acquire, at the fearful cost of protracting a calamitous war, a new and vast aceldama, for the immolation of the victims of our avarice, in Trinidad; where the pestilent exhalations of an uncleared tropical soil, would quicken the lethiferous process of oppression; and where enormous and evergrowing demands on the British slave market, would protract the chief pretence for continuing the devastation of Africa.

Still more aggravation was possible; and, though at the expence of the most obvious principles of worldly policy, was accordingly practised.—Conquest had given to us a temporary and precarious possession, of a foreign territory of vast extent, on the continent of South America. To settle it by British capital, was like building on another man's freehold. The folly was still grosser; for it was to increase the competitive powers of a dangerous rival to our sugar colonies; and to augment the future maritime resources of an enemy.—Yet such was our increased and enamoured attachment to the manstealing trade, and to West India oppression; so eager were we to shew our con-

tempt for consistency, and for the sacred principles upon which reformation had been promised;—so bold was our defiance of heaven; that full sixty thousand additional Slaves were manufactured by crimes in Africa, torn from their native land, and placed permanently upon that conquered soil, in the short term of three or four years, by British subjects alone. New plantations, from 70 to 100 miles in length, upon a frontier line, were opened at the same time in that foreign territory, upon British capital, or credit, in order to form still more extensive and insatiable demands for the same opprobrious commerce.*— These facts are so strange, that they will hardly be credible to future ages, though too notorious to be denied in the present. They imply a national infatuation which indicates, as well as an obduracy likely to have excited, the vengeance of the Almighty.

The enormity of the aggravation of our sin, since the first call to repentance, will perhaps be best estimated, by a view of the actual increase of the Slave trade since the year 1787.

* The following extract from the late work of Sir W. Young, an eminent Colonist, and parliamentary defender of the Slave Trade, will shew what even Gentlemen of that party, justly say of this branch of our national guilt :

“ During the last war, and especially in the years from 1798 to 1800, “ the Slave Trade (per table 8,) appears to have been greatly extended, “ and which is to be attributed to the then speculations of settling the “ vast and rich plains of Demerara; which province, on the return to “ Dutch Sovereignty, by the treaty of 1802, carried with it a vested “ British capital of many millions, and the means of increased produce “ to supply Europe with sugar, portending rivalry and ruin in the “ foreign market to the ancient British Colonies.”—(West India Com-
mon Place-book, 11, 12.—*But why was not this thought of by our Colonists in time?* The ENTHUSIASTS, in this case, as well as that of the Slave-carrying Act, are now admitted to have been the best politicians.

In that year, the number of slaves imported into our colonies collectively, including those which were afterwards re-exported, and sold to foreigners, was 21,023; and upon a medium of five years, from the end of the American war, the annual import was 21,307.* This too was a considerable increase upon the average of the three preceding years; and even while we possessed those colonies on the American Continent which are now become independent States, our whole Colonial import of slaves, is estimated by Mr. Edwards, at no more than 20,095 annually.|| Yet during ten years, from 1795 to 1804, both inclusive, the average number of these unhappy men yearly brought from Africa in British vessels, and under British colours, was no less than 32,377.† Including the trade carried on by our merchants under neutral colours, the whole export on British account, probably amounted to near 50,000 per annum; and in a single year of that term, we exported under our own flag alone 53,051.‡ On the whole, it is a moderate estimate, that we have more than doubled this horrible trade, since we solemnly recognized its guilty nature, and pledged ourselves to abandon it.

When we advert to the grounds chiefly resorted to by the advocates for a gradual, in preference to an immediate abolition, our impious inconsistency will be still more apparent. We prolonged the slave trade that our plan-

* See the account at large from authentic returns in Mr. Edwards' Hist. of the West Indies, Vol. 2. Book 4. Chap. 2. page 57.

|| Ibid. p. 55.

† See the account at large in Sir W. Young's West India Common Place Book, p. 8.

‡ Ibid.

tations in the Sugar colonies might fill up their ~~numbers~~. But what was the whole amount of slaves in those colonies in 1787? According to the official returns in the report of the Privy Council, 465,276. What is now the amount? Only 524,205;* giving an increase only of 58,929; but of this surplus, the new-acquired colony of Trinidada furnishes, by the same estimate, 19,709; so that the actual increase in the colonies we held in 1787, is only 39,220. Yet we have brought from Africa in British vessels alone, since the pretended necessities of these colonies was made an apology for the slave trade, not less than 709,691.|| If the trade under neutral colours, permitted till last year, be added to the account, we have probably dragged a *million* at least, of men, women, and children, into perpetual exile and bondage, since we stood pledged to abandon such oppressive practices; and equalled in a few years of our promised penitence, the former crimes of half a century.

The foreign slave trade indeed is at last abolished by

* This is Sir W. Young's estimate for 1805. *Ibid.*

|| By Sir Wm. Young's table copied from official returns to the House of Commons, the numbers which the ships were allowed to carry from the coast (and it is a moderate assumption that they carried no less) were from 1795 to 1804 inclusively, 323,770. In 1787, the number actually brought to the British Colonies, was 36,000.

No returns I believe have been published of the trade from that year to 1795; but it is a very low estimate to suppose, that at least as many were annually carried from the coast, as were imported in 1787. They were indeed probably far more numerous; but taking that as the average, we have in seven years 252,000. If we then estimate the exports of 1805 and 1806, of which there is also no authentic account, as equal to that of 1804, which was 36,899, there will be a further addition of 73,798. In all 706,691.

law ; a reformation the value of which I am by no means inclined to disparage ; but with many supporters of that great measure, its principle was purely political : and its effect in permanently reducing the extent of the slave trade, as well as in diminishing the guilt of that commerce, will be very equivocal, unless we now proceed to a radical and well-principled reformation. Meantime I am reviewing the conduct of our country let it be observed, since the year 1787 ; from which period to that of the last sessions of parliament, our adherence to this national sin was unqualified, and its aggravations such as I have noticed.

Can it be denied then, that we have in this great national offence, an adequate cause of the displeasure of Heaven, and of the calamities which have fallen upon the country ? or can it be alleged, that there is any cotemporary provocation that bears any proportion to the slave trade ? If other sins of the same heinous species, could be justly charged upon us ; if " the sorrowful sighing of the prisoner, the complaint of the poor oppressed, and the cry of innocent blood," had gone up against us from other regions than Africa, and the West Indies ; still it ought to be shewn, that in those other cases, as in this, the crime had been aggravated by equal obduracy, and extended with equal perverseness, after the open exposure of its guilt, and solemn calls for reformation. But in these respects, as well as in its magnitude, and its cruel effects, the slave trade stands alone among our national offences ; defying, like Satan, in the foremost rank, the wrath of the Almighty.

Could we suppose ourselves just arrived from another planet, impressed with our present ideas of the divine Go-

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vernment, but ignorant of the History of Europe since the year 1787, and informed alone of the Parliamentary discussions on the Slave Trade, and of those iniquities which England has since committed against the African race, we might naturally be disposed to inquire, “ Has no scourge from Heaven yet appeared? Have no calamities, indicatory of Divine wrath, overtaken that guilty land?” But should we next take up a history of the French Revolution, and of the fatal wars that have ensued; and learn how strangely the prosperity, the peace, and the security of England have been subverted by them, what singular evils we have endured, ever since our first refusal to abolish the slave trade, and by what still greater evils we are at this moment threatened; it would be impossible I conceive, not to recognize with wonder and awe, the chastising hand of God. The only difficulty would be, to comprehend how the living witnesses both of the provocation and the punishment, could possibly be unobservant of the visible connection between them.

Never, to be sure, can phænomena more strikingly support any hypothesis of this kind, than the dates, the nature, and the extent, of our public calamities, the opinion that they are providential chastisements for the slave trade.—A guilty, though highly-favoured people, are called upon to renounce a criminal and cruel, but long-established practice, as repugnant to the laws of God.—They hear—deliberate—disobey. While they still hesitate, a tremendous scourge is weaving for them in a neighbouring land—the moment they actually disobey, that scourge commences its inflictions.—

The abolition of the Slave Trade was first virtually refused by Parliament, in April, 1792. Immediately, we

were engaged in those stormy contentions within the realm, and those disputes with France, which soon terminated in the last calamitous war.—In February, 1793, the House of Commons more openly and clearly declared against reformation, by postponing for six months a motion made by Mr. Wilberforce, for going into a Committee on the Slave Trade; which was in effect to refuse even the gradual abolition voted in the preceding year.—In the same month, a sword was definitively drawn, which was not during nine years returned to its scabbard; and which is now redrawn, perhaps to be sheathed no more till England has ceased to exist.—Within that period of six months, during which the claims of justice and mercy were contumuously adjourned, events took place in France, fertile to us of unprecedented evils, as we already feel; and perhaps decisive of our fate.

We have since gone on in the same path, rejecting motion after motion, and bill after bill, upon the same obdurate principles; and a chastising providence has kept pace with our temerity; heaping misfortune on misfortune, and adding danger to danger. As we multiplied and aggravated the impious crime, God multiplied and aggravated the punishment. Treason, famine, mutiny, civil war, the loss of our specie, the sale of our land tax, the enormous growth of our national debt, the intolerable pressure of taxation, the discomfiture of our military enterprises, the destruction of our armies by disease, the deplorable ruin of our allies, the stupendous exaltation of our enemies; these, and other plagues, followed, like those of Egypt, in a rapid succession, upon every iteration of our refusals to obey the voice of God, by renouncing the execrable Slave-trade.

We obtained at length a breathing time of peace ; but we were still contumacious to the behests of the Almighty ; for such, I dare to call the plain demands of justice and humanity. He sent us therefore a new war ; and tremendous have been its events.

Where will this sad series end ? Can we weary out God ? Are we stronger than he ? Ah infatuated men ! who would still urge us to perseverance in this impious course, tremble at the prospect before you. Our public gloom, like the darkness of Egypt, may clear up for a while ; but if you harden yourselves still, the final event will be dreadful.

It is needless to point out the extraordinary nature of the second causes by which these calamities have been produced. They have excited universal astonishment, they have confounded the wisdom of the wise, and are without a parallel in the history of mankind. Even those who do not seriously look up to the disposing power of an all-wise and omnipotent Ruler of the earth, often speak of this case as if they did ; because they have no other mode of expressing their amazement at the strange progress of events. But how can the devout mind, possibly pass unnoticed, the striking proportion and resemblance, as well as the singular coincidences in point of time, between these wonders, and the sin of the Slave Trade ?

I date the grand provocation given by that crime, from the public developement of its nature, and the obdurate refusal to reform it.—And when upon earth, since the delivery of the Israelites from Egypt, was there an equal, or similar case ? *“ Ask now of the days that are past, which were before thee, since the day that God created man upon the earth ; and ask from one side of heaven unto*

the other, whether there hath been any such thing as this great thing is, or hath been heard like it?—Hath God assayed to take to himself a nation out of the midst of another nation, &c.

Let me with reverence imitate these awakening expostulations; and ask, was it ever before heard, or known, that God, speaking by the voice of conscience, and of his own revealed laws, publicly called upon a great, civilized, and highly-favoured people, to desist from spreading desolation and misery over a large region of the globe; and from carrying into a horrible bondage, millions of his rational creatures?—Was any human legislature ever before appealed to on a subject of such stupendous moment to the inhabitants of the earth, or upon such high and awful principles? But a still more alarming inquiry is, Did ever before any people, Christian or Pagan, so flagrantly violate the religious principles which they profess to respect, and offer so gross an affront to the Deity whom they outwardly worship; as the Parliament of England, in rejecting this appeal, and redoubling the crimes of the Slave Trade?

Surely in such a case, it is consonant to our preconceptions of the ways of Providence, that the punishment should be singular and wonderful in its means, as well in its severity. Surely the prodigies of the age, furnish here an awful parallel to the iniquities of England!

It is, I feel, injuring this great and sacred subject, to treat it in a cursory and partial way. The reasoning by which my own mind has long been clearly satisfied, that our sins against the African race have chiefly, or solely, drawn down upon us the calamities with which we have during near fifteen years been visited, rests upon an induction from many particulars; and to omit any of them, is

to weaken the force of the rest. Upon the singular and important events of the late war in the West Indies, and especially the extraordinary revolution in St. Domingo, many important observations might be made, tending greatly to fortify my general conclusion. But it is impossible in a work like the present fully to state, and still more to reason upon, the whole of the extraordinary phænomena from which my own convictions are derived. Yet I cannot wholly suppress at this great crisis, an opinion so closely connected with the general subject of this work, and with the destiny of my country; an opinion which has long had a powerful influence on the conduct of my life; and which I share in common with many men of the clearest understandings, as well as the most distinguished piety and virtue.

If my necessary limits will not allow me fully to state the hypothesis itself, and the positive arguments upon which it stands, much less to remove difficulties, or repel objections; but there is one which, from its specious nature, seems to demand some general notice.

Is it objected that other nations have also drunk, and hitherto much deeper than ourselves, of the phial of divine wrath poured out in the French revolution? I admit the fact.—But did they still drink deeper too of “the cup of trembling,” the dregs of which may soon be all our own, the objection would still be of little weight.

Without attempting to explain, or conjecture, the entire scheme of a chastising Providence; it may be presumed, that those nations also, have all grievously provoked the indignation of a righteous God; and some of them in the same way, though not in the same degree, with ourselves. Infinite wisdom well knows how to punish many different

offenders, by the same identical scourge, or through the same sources of evil.

I am relieved indeed from the necessity of suggesting a probable cause of provocation on the part of Austria, Prussia, and Russia; since the striking retaliation which two of those powers have already met with, for their injustice and cruelty towards Poland, seems of late to have made a strong impression on the public mind. We not only hear in the conversation of the serious, and even of the irreligious; but read in the public prints, where matter of pious observation does not often find a place, remarks on the exact retribution which Divine Providence has in this case brought home to the spoilers of an unfortunate nation. To be sure, when we turn our eyes to Poland as the seat of immediate war; when we recollect within how few years, its patriotic and unhappy Sovereign was deprived of his sceptre, by a foul confederacy of those powers, two of whom have since nearly lost their own; when we reflect on the unjust and violent partitions of territory, to which they have already been compelled in their turns to submit; and how reasonably they may dread a final dismemberment of their dominions:—When, in a word, we find Buonaparte at Warsaw; and recollect how lately he was at Berlin, and Vienna; it would be difficult even for an atheist, to ascribe such strong characteristics of a providential retribution, to the mere effect of chance.

What I would wish to add to the existing popular impressions on that subject, is only the remark, that Poland was like Africa, impiously destroyed upon pleas of political *expediency*.—That idolatrous principle, that grand heresy of the age, which strikes at the very foundation of the whole edifice of morals, and insults the Divine Lawgiver,

by arraigning the wisdom or goodness of his institutions, was the alleged defence of three mighty Sovereigns, for an avowed violation of justice.—They threw down the gauntlet to Omnipotence; and his vengeance seems to have taken it up.

In other countries, causes of provocation enough might be found perhaps, without listening to those accounts which have been given of the degenerated state of their private morals and manners; enough at least to satisfy those, who consider the substitution of philosophical scepticism for Christianity, as no venial offence against God. In Italy, that Caprea of gross and beastly sensuality, it would be still less difficult to find adequate causes, for its share of the general plagues. But after all, should any apparent difficulties remain on this subject, they would be only such as belong, in our finite views, to the ordinary providence of God. Some less offending nations of Europe, like innocent members of the same family, or country, may possibly be involved with their more guilty neighbours or connections, in evils which are the penal chastisement of extraordinary, as well as those which are the natural effects, of ordinary crimes. The Almighty has particular, or individual distinctions enough, and compensatory provisions enough, in store, to reconcile with universal justice the occasionally awful display of his moral discipline towards nations and communities of men, without disturbing the general laws of nature: but it is evident, that unless such a miraculous discrimination as was exhibited in Goshen, were again to be made; a scourge inflicted on many of the nations of Europe, must be felt in some measure by the rest.

As to France, Spain, Holland, and Portugal, their

shares in the oppression of Africa, at that epoch of general provocation which immediately preceded the grand revolution in France, were only inferior to our own. I mean, not to convey that they were chargeable with no other sins, peculiar in their extent and character to that period; but in Africa and the West Indies, those slave-trading nations, had all like ourselves, recently and greatly aggravated their long established offences.

Here, as in other parts of this great subject, I deeply regret the necessity of abstaining from full historical statements, of facts little known to the public.

It may perhaps surprise many readers to hear, that the unfortunate Louis XVIth, a short time prior to the revolution, distinguished himself from all his predecessors, by zealous endeavours to extend the slave trade of France.

Such however was the fact. That shocking trade, had been nearly abandoned by the French merchants; and the misguided monarch, under evil advice, laboured strenuously to induce them to resume it. By an ordinance of Oct. 1784, he offered a bounty of forty livres per ton (which reducing the French measurement of ships to our own standard, was equal to eighty livres per ton English) upon all ships that should clear out from the ports of France for the slave trade; and he added premiums on negroes imported into the French Colonies, of sixty livres per head, in the windward Islands, and one hundred livres in St. Domingo. — By subsequent ordinances, these premiums were raised by him to no less than one hundred and sixty livres in the former colonies, and two hundred and thirty livres in the latter.* The natural effect was so enormous an increase of this guilty

* See Privy Council Report on the Slave Trade, part 6. Title France.

commerce, that in 1787 and 1788, 60,345 slaves were imported into St. Domingo alone. On the whole, it may be fairly computed, that 300,000 human beings were carried into a miserable captivity, at the direct instigation of that Government which was soon after so terribly chastised.

It may perhaps be equally unknown to the British public at large, that at the same memorable period, Spain began a new career of oppression in her Colonies, and framed a new system of trade for them, expressly in order to encourage the importation of slaves, which accordingly did produce that effect to an enormous extent. The facts of this latter case, are so various, striking, and important, that they deserve a very particular statement; but from the absolute necessity of compression, I will here only give the recital of a decree of his Spanish Majesty, of February 1789, by which several of the new regulations were introduced.

“ *In order*, says that ill-advised, and since unfortunate Monarch,” “ *to promote by every imaginable means the great advantages which the encouragement of Agriculture must produce, I thought proper to cause the several plans of the introduction of Negroes into the Islands of Cuba, Santo Domingo, Porto Rico, and the province of Curaccas, to be well examined, with a view of recurring to the urgent necessity there is of such helps, without which these countries can neither prosper or flourish, nor produce to the state the immense riches, which the climate and fertility of their soil afford; and having treated this serious subject with that attention which the importance of it claims, I have determined for the present that this trade shall be carried on under the following rules and conditions.*” He afterwards, in the 12th Article, recites the object to be, “ *to procure for*

*“ all his Subjects the greater advantages in the Slave trade, as well as to augment the number of Cultivators in the American Colonies.”**

The contemporary conduct of Holland, was of the same opprobrious cast.—The Dutch slave trade had also languished, or rather was quite extinct, when in May 1788, the States General, at the instance of the Planters of Guiana, resolved on vigorous measures for its revival and extension. The leading resolution was in the following terms, “ *That every means should be employed to promote a speedy enlargement of the slave trade.*” Accordingly, they voted 250,000 guilders to the West India Company ; and adopted several regulations for encouraging the importation of negroes into their Colonies.† They were indeed limited to the term of six years; but God prescribed nearly the same limitation to the commerce, the liberty, and independency of Holland.

Portugal also, there is reason to believe, was rapidly increasing her Slave Trade at the time of the French revolution.—With her, however, it was not, as with the other powers, occasioned by a systematic change in her laws ; or by the direct subornation of the Government.—In her share of the scourge, she has been hitherto equally distinguished from them.

Thus cruelly did the great commercial nations of Europe, all at the same æra, resolve to extend the desolation, the miseries and crimes of Africa, to the utmost of their power. Already they dragged away every year 74,000†

* Privy Council Report on the Slave, Trade part 6. Title Spain.

† Same Report, and part Title Holland

† Edwards' W. Indies, 2 vol. p. 58.

of her unhappy children; and a great part of her coast began to be almost destitute of inhabitants: yet her insatiable tormentors, were determined to drain the veins of her population still more copiously, and to obtain fuller meals for their avarice, though they should reduce her to a desert. But the eye of the Almighty was over them; and to avenge devoted Africa at least, if not to save her, he dropped down among them the French revolution.

Surely it was a strange coincidence of events, that so many different nations should at the same æra, offer new and extreme provocation to divine justice, by the same species of iniquity, though without any mutual concert; and that each of them should immediately after be involved, by the same cause, in new and extreme calamities.—But when we regard the unforeseen and wonderful origin of all those calamities, the revolution of France, the coincidence becomes still more extraordinary. Induced, by a common temptation, the lucrative oppression of the African race, many nations start together in a new race of guilt: a strange source of unprecedented evil immediately bursts forth, and suddenly overwhelms them all. A cruel and unlimited slavery, is the subject of their crimes: a lawless and ferocious liberty, is made their common scourge. Not only France, but Europe, becomes almost a second Africa. Order, security, public morals, the sacred principles which mitigate the horrors of war, and regulate the intercourse of nations, have vanished, or are beginning to vanish, from this civilized quarter of the globe.—The public law of the Slave Coast, may soon be upon a level with that of polished Europe; and the persons of individuals, like their property, become the spoil of predatory war, in these once happy regions.—

Already, if recent intelligence from Hamburgh may be credited, Buonaparte takes credit for great moderation, in not selling his captives into slavery ; and intimates that London, will not be treated so mercifully in that respect, as Vienna and Berlin.

It must be quite unnecessary, with every considerate reader, to prove that France herself has had her full share of the sufferings, which she has been made the instrument of inflicting.—Of all the offending nations, her lot has been perhaps the most deplorable. Her glory, is like the light of a conflagration ; a lustre fed by ruin, misery and death, in the mansion to which it belongs.

While so many nations have been sustaining extraordinary evils, has not the hand of Providence distinguished some portion of the earth, with blessings equally unusual ?—It has.—Let us turn our eyes to the rising Western Empire, and we shall see a people, whose fortunes furnish a striking contrast to the calamities of European countries. As the autumnal storm, while it strips the grove of its leaves, and lays prostrate some of its more ancient trunks, favours the young and hardy pine, by opening to its aspiring point and expanding base, a freer course, and more copious sunshine ; so have those revolutionary tempests which have laid waste the ancient realms of Europe, given an accelerated growth to the United States of America, both in their strength and stature.—Population, agriculture, commerce, maritime power, how rapidly have they all increased in that country, since the revolution of France ! A new and vast domain also has been acquired, at the expence of the Spanish Empire. With such prodigious rapidity has the navigation of the United States increased, that

they promise soon to win from Europe, the Trident at least, if not the Sceptre, of the Western World.

Now, let it be well observed, that the United States have alone, of all the nations of the earth, during the same period, done much to redeem themselves from those sins to which, I chiefly ascribe the calamities of Europe. Indeed, their government and legislature, with whom the corporate responsibility in every country chiefly rests, have done all that was in their immediate power; while every state in the Union but one, has long since finally delivered itself from the guilt of the African Slave Trade.

It is truly honourable to the President and the Congress, to find by intelligence recently arrived, that the former has officially congratulated the latter, on the near approach of a period when they will possess the constitutional power of giving a final blow to that hated commerce. That the power will be exercised, immediately after it vests in the general legislature, has been long beyond a doubt; and though the first of January, 1808, is now at no great distance, the President suggests a mean of accelerating the effect of the intended law, by a previous notice, which may prevent the inchoation of voyages in the present year, to be terminated in the next.

I think my Country has cause to complain of America; and am not sure that the amicable arrangements lately made, are of a kind to reconcile with her pretensions, our most essential belligerent rights. But while she acts, in relation to the most helpless and injured of the human race, upon such righteous and liberal principles, it is impossible to refuse her our esteem; or to grudge any sacrifice for the sake of her friendship that self preservation may permit.

I trust that a nation which thus honourably respects the sacred rights of humanity and justice, will not long persevere in a line of conduct which ministers to the pestilent ambition of France, and abridges the only remaining hope of liberty in Europe. Indeed, the late outrageous and preposterous measures of Napoleon, will probably supersede all questions that have lately subsisted between this country and the neutral powers; by the new and undeniable rights which result to us from such conduct in the enemy.— May the harmony between England and America be settled on the firmest foundations; and among the many sympathies which ought to bind us to each other, may we soon have to add a mutual abhorrence, and conventional renunciation of the Slave-trade!

But while America, has thus honourably distinguished herself from other commercial nations, and has been equally distinguished by her singular prosperity in the present disastrous times; there is one country, I confess, which hitherto but imperfectly confirms, on a comparative view of her fortunes, the hypothesis I aim to establish.

That country, alas! is Great Britain.—We have suffered enough to evince that we have incurred the disfavour of Heaven; but other nations less guilty, in regard to the Slave-trade at least, have been visited more severely. We have in truth exceeded in this respect, all their united provocations. Our offences against the helpless Africans, have been far greater in amount; and against God, we have sinned more deeply than others, by all the wide difference between our national blessings and theirs. Our share of the crime is also preeminent, through that peculiar knowledge of its detestable nature, which we have lately acquired.

I fear it may even be added, that the perseverance of other nations in their iniquity, is fairly imputable to England; as being a natural effect of our example, after our deliberate examination of the case.

But England, though severely chastised, is not yet, like some of her fellow-sinners, cast down or destroyed; and if the dangers of the country had finally subsided, this I admit would be some apparent drawback on the force of the reasons that have been offered for ascribing our public calamities to the Slave-trade, though God can find means of making us miserable enough, even without employing further against us, the sword of Buonaparte.

But here it is, that I find by far the most alarming view of this truly awful subject. Let the sad prospects opened in the first division of this work, be fairly contemplated; and then let it be remembered, that the very country whose fate would demonstrably, in the event of its subjugation by France, be the most terrible that ever awaited a nation, is the same which has most highly provoked the avenging justice of God.—Nor let us harden ourselves on account of any seemingly auspicious change in the course of events, or the prospect of new confederacies. “ Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not pass unpunished.”

At the present moment, there is another consideration which fills me with the most painful anxiety; and which urges me here to conclude this work imperfect though it is, that I may no longer withhold from my country, a feeble but seasonable warning.—In a few days, or weeks, Parliament will have to decide, whether it shall redeem the solemn pledge which it has recently given, for the excision of this dreadful traffic; or whe-

ther by a new apostacy, worse by far than any former provocation of the same kind, it shall fill up the measure of our iniquities, and draw down upon us, perhaps, a speedy and signal vengeance.

I have too high an opinion of the dignity, as well as the moral feelings of the British legislature, to regard so opprobrious a relapse as a very probable event. But when I advert to the long and sad experience which we have had of the fate of such questions in Parliament; when I remember the assiduous opposition, and the still more fatal apathy, by which the fairest expectations of the friends of the oppressed Africans, have been repeatedly ruined; my hopes are mingled, I own, with much uneasiness and fear.

May God, in whose hands are the hearts of all men, incline those who, under his permission, are our lawgivers, to deliver us at length, without delay, from the guilt of innocent blood!—Then only shall I hope that the wisest measures of defence will be truly efficacious; then only may solid peace and security be expected to succeed to the dangers of the country.

THE END.



